



# Public Health Bulletin

A Publication of the Public Health Department, Gregory Thomas, M.D., Director • [www.slopublichealth.org](http://www.slopublichealth.org)  
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## Reducing Risk of SARS Transmission in Health Clinics

To reduce the risk of transmission of not only SARS but other seasonal infections such as influenza, a patient respiratory hygiene program should be developed and implemented in all healthcare facilities.

Patients entering any healthcare facility should be educated about the importance of the respiratory hygiene program. This can be accomplished by posting signs in appropriate languages at all entrances used by patients who enter hospitals, emergency departments, physicians' offices or outpatient clinics.

In addition to signs, a respiratory hygiene program should:

- Provide surgical masks to all patients with symptoms of a respiratory illness (fever and/or cough) with instructions on proper use and disposal.
- Place a box of surgical masks as close to the entry as possible.
- Instruct patients to cover their noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- Provide a small paper or plastic bag for mask and tissue disposal.
- Provide a readily accessible waterless, hand hygiene product and instruct patients to decontaminate their hands after contact

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**Health Director Notes:** *Gregory Thomas, M.D., M.P.H.*



## Post Earthquake Thank Yous, Reassurance on Bioterrorism

The recent earthquake tested the county and community disaster response. The damage, while extensive, pales in comparison to the recent earthquake in Iran, which was reported to also be 6.5 on the Richter scale.

First responders – fire, law enforcement, and medical staff – responded quickly and effectively.

I would like to thank all the medical personnel – physicians, nurses and others who responded throughout the county and especially at Twin Cities Community Hospital to help the injured. Thanks also to the many volunteers, including Red Cross who set up shelters and other assistance.

### Local Bioterrorism Risk

There is a very low probability of a bioterrorist attack in San Luis Obispo County, according to the San Luis Obispo County Department of Public Health and the State of California.

To date, no anthrax exposures or cases have occurred in California. In addition, exposures and cases

elsewhere in the country have been limited to high-profile persons either associated with the media, political office, personnel responding to reports of exposure, or mailroom workers.

No private citizens have received mail at their homes that has tested positive for a biologic agent, either here or elsewhere in the U.S. There have been no credible threats in California, and no exposures or cases of biologic contamination.

People who have a high level of anxiety regarding these events can talk to someone about their fears by calling the Mental Health Department at 781-4700.

### What to do with a suspicious letter/package:

Do not open the package and do not shake or empty its contents. Place the envelope or container in a Ziploc or similar type baggie and then place this inside another bag (double bag). If the contents have been spilled or leaked, cover the

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## Stop Smoking Classes Scheduled

Stop smoking classes and individual cessation counseling are now in session throughout San Luis Obispo County. The Tobacco Control Program is providing cessation services in Atascadero, Arroyo Grande, Morro Bay and San Luis Obispo. The classes are based on six meetings, are free of charge and all materials are provided.

Start dates for upcoming classes in Atascadero, Arroyo Grande, Morro Bay and San Luis Obispo are: February 4 and 18, March 10, April 7 and 17, and May 2.

Six weeks of nicotine replacement therapy is available to participants who do not have insurance or Medi-Cal and whose income is at or below the 200% federal poverty level.

To sign up for classes or individual counseling and receive more information on locations, please call the Tobacco Control Program at 781-5564.

## Reducing SARS (cont.)

with respiratory secretions and before contact with a health care worker, family member or registration personnel.

- Separate patients with respiratory illness from other patients by either placing them into a cubicle, exam room, or physical separation from others by at least three feet.

These recommendations are based upon recently released California Department of Health Services (CDHS) *SARS Planning Guide for Healthcare Facilities*.

## Request for Proposals for HIV Education and Prevention Activities

In January, the San Luis Obispo County HIV Prevention, Advocacy and Care Consortium will distribute its 2004 Request For Proposals to programs wishing to provide HIV education and prevention throughout the county.

Applicants can be non-profit, community-based agencies or county government programs and should seek to provide programs for one or more of the Consortium's target populations. These populations are prioritized as follows.

1. Men who have sex with men (MSM) - This category includes gay youth.
2. Substance users (stimulant and injection drug users-IDUs) - This category includes residents of the San Luis Obispo County Jail, women who are partners of users, and drug users both in and out of treatment.
3. People with HIV/AIDS and their partners.
4. Temporary and seasonal workers - Hispanics.
5. Youth at risk (up to age 23) - This category includes those in community schools, continuation schools and Juvenile Services Center (JSC).

There will be a bidder's conference in January (details TBA) and applications will be due February 27. For more information or to request an application, call Michelle Shoresman at the San Luis Obispo County Public Health Department AIDS Program: 781-5540 or 788-2906.

## HIV Prevention Intervention

A one-day training on HIV prevention interventions designed for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHA) will be held in San Luis Obispo on February 4.

Hosted by the San Luis Obispo County Public Health Department AIDS Program, the training will be conducted by the California Department of Health Services, Office of AIDS and the Center for Community Health at UCLA. This training will:

- 1) highlight evidence-based interventions that have effectively reduced sexual and/or injection drug use risk behaviors among those living with HIV/AIDS.
- 2) demonstrate exercises and activities used in the interventions so you can replicate them in your programs.
- 3) discuss strategies and concepts to consider when adapting scientific interventions and integrating behavioral science theory into programs.

The training will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Cooperative Extension Auditorium (downstairs from Environmental Health on Sierra Way). For more information, call Michelle Shoresman, 788-2906. Registration will be available online at <http://chipts.ulca.edu> under events.

## California Health Alert Network Update

The California Health Alert Network (CAHAN) is a system that allows the State Department of Health Services to alert local health departments on a 24x7 basis of important information such as issues related to smallpox vaccinations, West Nile Virus, or homeland security alerts.

It also allows local health departments to alert their own staff or other partners (hospitals, physicians, fire/emergency medical responders, etc.) by any of these methods when important information needs to be immediately communicated.

CAHAN can send alerts using alphanumeric pager, telephone, cell phone, and email; and also allows for secure document sharing between the state, local health departments, and public health partners.

The Public Health Department has been given multiple “seats” on this Network that can be used to alert physicians of public health emergencies in the county.

If you have questions or are interested in participating in this alerting network, please call Tracey Vardas at 788-2067.

## Health Officer (cont.)

item. Leave the room and close the door. Before leaving the residence, wash your face and hands with soap and water. If between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, call Environmental Health at 781-5544. Otherwise, call 781-4550 for further directions.

## Homeland Security Advisory System Threat Conditions

The threat conditions shown below represent increasing risk of terrorist attacks. Beneath each threat condition are suggested protective measures which may be the shared responsibility of local jurisdictions. At all threat condition levels, San Luis Obispo County is working to ensure that the county remains vigilant, prepared, and ready to deter terrorist attacks.

### GREEN - LOW

- Refine and exercise as appropriate preplanned protective measures.
- Ensure personnel receive proper training on security advisory systems and specific preplanned department or agency Protective Measures.
- Institutionalize a process to assure that all facilities and regulated sectors regularly assess for vulnerabilities to terrorists attacks, and all responsible measures are taken to mitigate these vulnerabilities.

### BLUE - GUARDED

- Check communications with designated emergency response or command locations.
- Review and update emergency response procedures.
- Provide the public with any information that would strengthen its ability to respond appropriately.

### YELLOW - ELEVATED

- Increase surveillance of critical locations.
- Coordinate emergency plans as appropriate with nearby jurisdictions.
- Assess whether the precise characteristics of the threat require the further refinement of preplanned protective measures.
- Implement, as appropriate, contingency and emergency response plans.

### ORANGE - HIGH

- Coordinate necessary security efforts with federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies or any National Guard or other appropriate armed forces organizations.
- Take additional precautions at public events and possibly consider altering venues or even cancellation.
- Prepare to execute contingency procedures, such as moving to an alternative location or dispersing the workforce.
- Restrict threatened facility access to essential personnel only.

### RED - SEVERE

- Increase or redirect personnel to address critical emergency needs.
- Assign emergency response personnel and pre-position and mobilize specially trained teams or resources.
- Monitor, redirect or constrain transportation systems.
- Close public and government facilities.

**San Luis Obispo County Reported Cases of Selected Communicable Diseases - 2003**

<b>Disease</b>	<b>Jan-Sept.</b>	<b>Oct.</b>	<b>Nov.</b>	<b>Dec.</b>	<b>Total 2003</b>	<b>Total 2002</b>
AIDS	6	0	0	0	6	20
Amebiasis	1	0	0	0	1	0
Campylobacter	14	3	4	9	30	28
<b>Chlamydia</b>	<b>373</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>492</b>	<b>466</b>
Coccidioidomycosis	30	11	3	27	71	42
<b>Cryptosporidiosis</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>
E. Coli 0157:H7	1	0	0	0	1	5
<b>Giardia</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>
PPNG	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Gonorrhea</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>30</b>
Hepatitis A	2	0	1	1	4	6
<b>Hepatitis B</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>26</b>
Hepatitis C Acute	0	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Hepatitis C Chronic</b>	<b>453</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>1174</b>
Hepatitis, Unspecified	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Measles (Rubeola)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Meningitis - Total	16	8	6	4	34	15
<b>Meningitis - Viral</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>10</b>
Meningitis, H-Flu	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Meningococcal Disease</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
Pertussis	2	0	0	1	3	1
<b>Rubella</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Salmonellosis	6	5	0*	0*	11	10
<b>Shigellosis</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
Syphilis - Total	4	1	4	1	10	12
<b>Tuberculosis</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>

\*Salmonella cases in November and December to be reflected in revised table.

One case of infant botulism in November.



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